

Socrates Café

Wednesday, December 14, 2016

*All political, economic and social points of view are welcomed and encouraged.
The only ground rule is that we will be polite to those opinions that differ from our own.*

There are some 300 sanctuary cities in the United States including Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Philadelphia. Mayors in at least seven major cities have said they will continue to shelter illegal immigrants from federal immigration authorities after Donald Trump becomes president.

The policies of sanctuary cities vary. Typically, local police will not help ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) identify illegal immigrants for deportation unless they have committed a serious crime.

President-elect Trump has stated that he would block federal funding for sanctuary cities. Many billions of dollars are involved. For example, San Francisco gets about \$1 billion each year from the federal government in aggregate.

Presidents have limited powers to strip federal funding from local governments without the express approval of Congress, but they can limit discretionary grants, especially in the areas of criminal justice and homeland security,

While ICE can enforce federal immigration laws without the cooperation of local authorities it is difficult to do so. The Department of Homeland Security can issue detainers for a deportable individual who is in jail or about to be released to extend detention, but the cities have to enforce them. Some cities will not and courts have been mixed in permitting detention without a specific warrant for that person.

Philadelphia, for example, will not cooperate with a detainer request unless the person has committed a first-or second-degree felony involving violence.

The House last year passed legislation that would withhold federal law-enforcement grants from cities that shelter undocumented immigrants but the bill was blocked in the Senate and President Obama said he would veto it if it were passed.

The subject of sanctuary cities is one that raises emotions. Last year, an undocumented immigrant who was deported five times shot and killed 32-year-old Kathryn Steinle as she walked with her father along a pier in San Francisco. Local officials had ignored a request from federal officials to have the man held despite his criminal record and five previous deportations. Since that time the city's Board of Supervisors has voted unanimously to keep the policy in place.

What, if anything, should we do about sanctuary cities? What are the key issues? What are the respective rights of the people, the cities, the states, and the federal government?

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